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ABSTRACT

Employing a question/answer format, this 13-section report presents descriptive and evaluative information about Amarillo College's ACcess Center, which provides developmental courses, tutoring, and support services to the academically underprepared. The first sections identify ACcess advisees as students scoring below the 9th grade level on any of four measures, define the Center's role, and demonstrate that, rather than draining the college's budget, ACcess makes a profit. After explaining why ACcess courses receive college credit and use letter grades, the report emphasizes that remediation is suitable and necessary at the college level. The next sections present evaluative data indicating that: (1) ACcess is successful in preparing students for degree programs; (2) former ACcess advisees have higher course completion rates than non-ACcess students; (3) the English as a Second Language program prepares foreign students to succeed in degree programs; (4) remedial reading courses are effective in improving reading speed, comprehension, and vocabulary; and (5) tutoring and study skills instruction positively influence student performance. After explaining that ACcess courses are not padded with students who do not belong and noting that the program does not succeed with every student, the report presents the requirements which qualify students to leave the program and explains the school's policy toward "ultra-high-risk" students. (DAB)

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A BAKER'S DOZEN QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCESS:

THE UNABBREVIATED REPORT

By

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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The ACcess Center
In Cooperation With
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*Abbreviated report was distributed to all Amarillo College personnel in May, 1982.

A BAKER'S DOZEN QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCESS: THE UNABBREVIATED REPORT

Compiled by the ACcess Center
In Cooperation With
The Office of Institutional Research
Amarillo College
1982

1. WHO IS AN ACCESS ADVISEE?

Below 9th gr. criteria

To qualify as an ACcess advisee, an incoming student must have one or more of these scores:

SAT Composite	0-630	
ACT Composite	0- 10	
High School Average	0- 73	
Nelson-Denny Composite	0- 40	(below 9th gr. reading level)

2. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ACCESS?

Since its creation in 1974, ACcess has evolved to include these functions:

(1) Developmental courses — (1) ACcess offers developmental courses and services.

(2) Academic support — (2) ACcess provides academic support through tutoring, study skills, handicap services and Special Services.

(3) Serve underprepared — (3) ACcess advises the academically underprepared by:

a. below 9th grade — a. assisting students performing below a 9th grade level to build basic skills so they might ultimately compete within a degree program at Amarillo College;

b. below 6th grade — b. assisting students performing below a 6th grade level to build basic and life skills to be able to move into the work force successfully.

3. IS THE ACCESS DIVISION A DRAIN UPON THE COLLEGE BUDGET?

ACcess makes a profit

No. As a matter of fact, the performance of former ACcess/ESL students has had a definite impact on the budget. As calculated by the Institutional Research

Office, former ACcess/ESL students who had succeeded and persisted into degree programs at Amarillo College took seven percent of all the regular coursework at AC during fall 1981 If you assume this same percentage for the entire 1981-82 year, ACcess income substantially exceeds expenses.

Three types of ACcess-related income can be identified: (1) income directly generated by the program ($298,029), (2) income generated in coursework taken by former ESL students--none of which would have been available had the ESL program not existed ($349,574), and (3) income generated by former ACcess advisees ($48,741). This figure reflects 20 percent of the total--poor readers who complete Reading 133 have about a 20 percent higher retention rate than other poor readers.

ACcess expenses include all grant expenditures as well as regular budget items ($445,681). As can be seen, the ACcess Division is not a drain on the college budget. In fact, it will have generated $250,664 in profit in 1981-82.

4. WHY DO ACCESS COURSES RECEIVE COLLEGE CREDIT AND LETTER GRADES?

Coord. Bd. funds dev. ed.

The Coordinating Board has for many years viewed developmental education as a role of community colleges. Thus, they fund developmental courses under the college credit funding formulas. It is in the best interest of Amarillo College to qualify developmental (ACcess) courses according to the guidelines of the Coordination Board. In some instances, the credit is transferable; in other instances, developmental courses earn institutional credit only. Each degree program has the right to accept or reject courses as electives. Some

ACcess courses are 0 level and do not satisfy graduation requirements.

Standards and grades

A Pass-Fail grading system would work against any argument toward standards in ACcess courses. If it is feared that by using a regular grade point scale ACcess is diluting grade standards at AC, the following information should help dispel that myth. Compared to the fall 1981 college population GPA of 2.51, the GPA of current ESL students was 2.38; the GPA of current ACcess advisees (those taking and those not taking ACcess courses) is only 1.77. Use of an A through F grading scale clearly provides underprepared students the experience of earning grades based on standards.

5. SHOULDN'T REMEDIATION BE DONE BY PUBLIC SCHOOLS BEFORE STUDENTS ENTER COLLEGE?

AC students:
Ave. age 28
77% over 19
5% no h.s. diploma

The majority of students at Amarillo College are older than the average high school graduate. The average age in 1981 was 28 and 77 percent of the student body was over 19. More than five percent of those who enter Amarillo College are admitted on some basis other than high school diploma. It is unrealistic to assume that public schools should be responsible for the remediation of a student body whose characterics are not predominantly that of recent high school graduates.

12% h.s. grads. below 9th

The Institutional Research Office has confirmed that in spring 1982 alone, a conservative 12 percent of the 17-19 year olds enrolled in AC who graduated from Amarillo high schools scored below the 9th grade level on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. This fact

points up that not even all recent high school graduates come to AC well prepared.

15% below 9th

Amarillo College is an "open door" institution devoted to "community" needs. For the past four years, a conservative average of 15 percent of all who enter AC credit courses, are reading below the 9th grade level. Surely 15 percent of our student body justifies developmental education as a legimate part of a community college devoted to "community" needs.

6. DOES THE ACCESS PROGRAM REALLY PREPARE STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN DEGREE PROGRAMS?

Yes. The Institutional Research Office has been tracing the performance of former ACcess advisees and former ESL students. The facts are clear.

Former advisees defined

Definition:

(1) Former ACcess advisees (those who have "exited" from ACcess) are those who have achieved:
   a. beyond a 10th grade reading level and/or
   b. 18 transferable credit hours with 2.0 GPA or better.

(2) Former English as a Second Language (ESL) advisees are those who have completed the Advanced level of the ESL program successfully.

Facts:

(1) Took 7% coursework

(1) During fall 1981, former ACcess/ESL advisees took seven percent of all regular coursework taken at Amarillo College.

(2) 2 out of 30

(2) Out of a typical class of 30, two students were former ACcess or ESL advisees.

(3) 1076 courses/$243K

(3) During fall 1981, former ACcess/ESL advisees took 1076 regular college courses worth over $243,000 in state reimbursement and tuition.

(4) 10 load hours

(4) Former ACcess/ESL advisees were carrying an average of 10 credit hours per semester.

(5) GPA & return positive

(5) Positive comparisons have been drawn between former ACcess/ESL advisees and two groups. The first group was the entire college population; the second group included 105 students who entered AC prior to fall 1981 reading below 9th grade but who did not take reading. The following table was taken from fall 1981 performance figures and spring 1982 return rates.

	No.Courses taken	GPA	% Returned
Former ACc/ESL	1,076	2.35	70.2
College population	16,229	2.51	58.6
Below 9th gr. w/o ACc.	425	1.79	61.9

The GPA of former ACcess/ESL advisees was below the college population by six percent but 31 percent higher than that of the students who needed but did not receive ACcess help.

Seventy percent of former ACcess/ESL students returned and continued to be enrolled in degree programs. Their return rate was greater than that of the college population as well as that of the below 9th grade group who had no ACcess assistance.

(6) Handicap students persist

(6) Though not indicated in the above table, it should be noted that handicapped students (who may or may not be ACcess advisees but who are

very often served by notetakers, readers or tutors) earned a fall 1981 GPA of 2.54 and returned at a 76 percent rate. As a whole, they are a motivated, persistent group of students who now number over eighty.

(7) GPA better in 28 majors (7) The performance of former ACcess/ESL advisees in each of the 102 degree programs at AC was studied. In 28 degree programs, former ACcess/ESL students were ahead of non-ACcess students in terms of GPA; in 39 majors, non-ACcess students had a higher GPA; and in 35 majors, there was no comparison data or no difference. For a specific analysis of the majors in a particular division, see the computer print-out attached to that Division Chairman's copy of the report.

7. WHAT ABOUT COURSE COMPLETION OF FORMER ACCESS ADVISEES?

Course completion rates are an excellent measure of persistence in learning particularly when they are controlled for the difficulty of the major by comparing former ACcess advisees to non-ACcess students in each major.

Fewer WX and I's

Former ACcess/ESL advisees took seven percent of all regular college courses during fall 1981 and earned a slightly higher proportion of W, WF, and WP grades than were earned by the college population. On the other hand, a lesser proportion of WX and I grades were earned by the former ACcess/ESL advisees than by the college population. However, when one examined the performance of former ACcess to

Fewer W, WX, WF, WP, I's in majors

non-ACcess students major by major in 102 degree programs, former ACcess/ESL students consistently had lower withdrawal (W, WX, WF, WP) and incomplete (I) rates in more degree programs than did non-ACcess students during fall 1981. The table below highlights these facts. For a look at specific majors in a division, see the computer print-out attached to that Division Chairman's copy of the report.

	W	WX	I	WF	WP
Former ACc/ESL ahead*	45	40	42	19	33
Non-ACcess ahead*	21	11	5	9	18
No comparison/no difference	36	51	55	74	51

*Lower withdrawal rates

Former ACcess/ESL advisees consistently had fewer withdrawal grades (W, WX, WP, WF) and fewer incomplete grades (I) in more degree programs than did non-ACcess students.

In summary, it is clear that former ACcess advisees are doing better major by major with regard to course completion than those students whose entry level skills at AC indicated they did not need ACcess.

8. ARE FOREIGN STUDENTS ABLE TO SUCCEED IN DEGREE PROGRAMS AFTER THEY COMPLETE THE ESL PROGRAM?

Yes. The performance of students who exited the ESL program after completing the Advanced level before fall 1981 was examined by the Office of Institutional Research. The findings were these:

(1) 2.4 GPA

(1) The fall 1981 GPA of former ESL students was 2.43 in regular courses which compared favorably to a college population GPA of 2.51.

(2) Fewer WX and I's

(2) Former ESL students received fewer WX and I grades than the college population. They received a slightly higher percentage of W, WF, and WP grades.

(3) 67% return rate

(3) The spring 1982 retention rate of former ESL students was 66.8 percent as compared with the overall college population rate of 58.6 percent.

Foreign students who successfully completed the ESL program are competing admirably in the degree programs at AC.

9. DOES IT REALLY HELP TO TAKE READING COURSES?

Rdng. improves spd.comp., vocab.

Yes. Semester after semester, studies have shown that students who complete Reading 133 make a major improvement in their reading skills no matter what their skill level was upon entry into the course. Consistently, based on pre and post testing with the Nelson-Denny, 90 percent of those who complete the course (1) double their reading speed, (2) read at a 12th grade rate or beyond, and (3) improve their comprehension and vocabulary by two grade levels.

Persist and perform better

Two hundred and nineteen students who had originally entered AC reading below the 9th grade level were identified in fall 1981 for a study of the effectiveness of the reading program. Of this number, 114 had completed reading prior to fall 1981, while 105 had never enrolled in reading. The differences in their performance are distinct.

	No. of Students	Courses Attempted	GPA	% Courses Completed	% Returned
Non-Reading	105	4.05	1.79	63.53	61.9
Reading	114	3.87	2.24	80.54	79.9

Those who had taken reading completed a far higher proportion of their courses, returned to college in spring 1982 at a much greater rate, and earned a substantially higher grade point average.

Non-rdng. gr. cost AC

If this information is interpreted in terms of dollars and cents, the Institutional Research Office indicates that over $13,600 in state reimbursement was lost in spring 1982 as a result of students who needed but had not taken reading and were not retained into spring 1982.

10. DO TUTORING AND STUDY SKILLS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Yes. Both tutoring and study skills show positive influence on student performance.

Tutored stdnts.return to AC

Tutoring

In fall 1981, the Peer Tutoring program served 226 students who received three or more hours of tutoring. There were a total of 2480.35 hours tutored, and 63 tutors employed. Approximately 85 percent of those requesting tutoring indicated that the reason was unsatisfactory progress in a course. The table below indicates the number of courses attempted, final GPA, percent of courses completed and percent returned.

	No.of Students	Courses Attempted	GPA	% Courses Completed	% Returned
Tutored students	226	4.20	2.28	79.83	80.5
College population	5365	3.03	2.51	80.58	58.6

Even though tutored students, by their own admission were experiencing difficulty in one or more courses, they finished the semester with only a slightly lower GPA. More important is the fact that 80.5 percent of all students who received tutoring in fall 1981 were re-enrolled for classes in the spring.

Study Skills

The study skills component of the ACcess Division has directed its effort in two major areas. The first is a regularly scheduled class, Reading 111- Strategies for Learning; the second is the College Success Workshops.

Study course students retained

Strategies for Learning course - During fall 1981, the GPA and retention rate of those who completed Reading 111 was studied. The GPA was slightly lower than the college population while the retention rate was approximately 15 percent higher as shown on the table below.

	GPA	% Returned
Reading 111 students	2.34	74.4
College population	2.51	58.6

Positive experience

The retention and grade point figures for the course are backed up by student perceptions of the course. Of 68 students surveyed in fall 1981, 97 percent indicated that the course had helped them in their academic efforts. Over 95 percent found the course interesting and cited areas such as reading technique, notetaking, and test preparation as the most useful topics covered.

Workshop participants retained

College Success Workshops - The workshops have been presented to more than 1000 students over the last three years. In fall 1981, the workshop was made a part of regular freshman orientation. One hundred seventy-six freshmen attended the two-hour sessions. Follow-up studies indicate positive GPA and retention on this group. Admittedly, there was some self-selection in the group who attended; however, the method of referral was designed to minimize the effects.

	GPA	% Returned
Workshop attenders	2.46	75.0
College population	2.51	58.6

Students claim improvement

Evaluation findings from orientation indicated that 91 percent of the students responding to a follow-up questionnaire felt that the College Success Workshop was a useful part of orientation and 85 percent of those responding stated that the workshop had helped them in their studies at Amarillo College.

11. DOES ACCESS "PAD" ITS COURSES WITH STUDENTS THAT DO NOT BELONG THERE?

No. It would be difficult for ACcess advisors to "pad" courses because they only serve as advisors for the following:

ACcess advises:

(1) below 9th grade

(1) students whom the college has determined are underprepared upon entry to AC, i.e., those who read below the 9th grade level or have an equivalent entrance score,

(2) suspension

(2) students whose academic suspension has been waived by the Dean of Instruction, and

(3) ESL

(3) limited English speaking students until they complete the ESL program.

Others take ACcess by choice

It is true that some students who are not ACcess advisees take reading courses to improve their study skills, their comprehension, their reading speed, or their spelling. Since these students are not customarily advised by ACcess, it is assumed that their major advisor recognizes the value of reading courses and recommends one or more. Others have indicated that they selected a reading course upon the recommendation of a fellow student or friend.

12. DOES ACCESS SUCCEED WITH EVERY STUDENT?

No cure-all

No. The program would never claim to solve all academic problems nor be able to meet the needs of all students who are performing at below a 9th grade level. ACcess personnel will, however, give any student who seeks assistance the benefit of all the knowledge and resources available to help overcome academic weaknesses.

13. WHEN IS A STUDENT NO LONGER AN ACCESS ADVISEE?

Those who are released to their major advisors as "exit" students from ACcess must meet at least one of the following requirements:

(1) Above 10th gr.

(1) above a 10th grade reading level, and/or

(2) 18 cr. hrs./2.0 GPA

(2) eighteen credit hours in transferable college courses with at least a 2.0 GPA.

"Ultra-high-risk" policy

"Ultra-high-risk" students are those who score below a 6th grade level on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. A proposal approved by the Executive Committee and Division Chairmen in spring 1982 provides that ACcess work with these students for no more than two long semesters to build skills to a competitive level. If these students are unable to achieve beyond a 6th grade performance level in that length of time, a contract is negotiated specifying that (1) ACcess will work with them only one more long semester, and (2) they must enroll in specified 0 level ACcess courses that will build life and work skills designed to help these students move out of AC and into the job market.

Upon completion of that final semester, ACcess will exit the student from the program. From then on, the option to readmit the student to any AC degree program rests solely with the major advisor. ACcess will continue to trace the performance of those who are allowed to enter degree programs, but ACcess will no longer provide academic support services for these "ultra-high-risk" students.

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